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## THE PROFESSIONAL PERSON

Are you a professional? To be so is to walk a long trail that leads upward, crests onto a plateau, and then upward again. It's a personal trail guided by numerous signposts: the Golden Rule, the Ten Commandments, and the Society's code of ethics.

Professional associations such as SWST have standardized admission requirements. To fulfill these requirements is essential; but a paid-up voting membership does not make a professional person. *Such is the confusion of many people.* Likewise: although a professional person may write, authorship does not make a professional; although a professional person is likely to receive payment for services, payment does not establish a professional person; although a professional person may speak at seminars and symposia, public appearances do not ordain a professional person.

Furthermore, it is up to the individual to exceed the minimum requirements of his profession. To be a professional is a personal "thing" which is earned through the application of knowledge, quality of workmanship, and responsibility of conduct. This leads to the attainment of professionalism through self-regulation.

This objective is attainable by young men and women; yet, it remains a lifetime challenge. So it is that we pass upward

along the trail from plateau to plateau of ability and proficiency. A professional person does not remain static! Nor does one's vocation really matter. And that is the excitement of professionalism.

Professional status is not an end in itself, but rather the constant growth of the person. It contains an implied contract to fulfill the needs of society and the profession as well as an obligation to further develop a common fund of knowledge. In short, to apply and increase knowledge.

A word of caution to those persons looking toward professionalism—each plateau is a lofty but precarious position of respect. If that respect is lost, the thorns of life quickly poke through.

Alas! Professionalism is a perishable product; to be kept it must grow and be maintained. It must have vitality! It is not and cannot be a gift, nor can it be bought. Abuse of professionalism will result in loss of its prestige.

Motivation of service to society and profession is the hallmark of a true professional person.

Are you a *PROFESSIONAL*?

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